* To posistion Tourism as a national priority,
* To enhance India's competiveness as a tourist destination,
* To improve and expand product development,
* To create world-class infrastructure and
* To evolve strategies for effective marketing including creating an India Tourism Brand using market research and digital technologies for marketing.

(c) An initiative has already been taken by inviting views/ comments from the State Governments/UT Administrations. The issue has also been discussed in the Chief Ministers' and Tourism Ministers' Conference in which the States have been persuaded to agree to the proposal.

Misuse of Funds

97. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether he is aware that a number of States have not utilised funds for tourism but have mostly misused these funds;

(b) if so, the States and UTs who have misused the Central funds for developing tourism ;

(c) the total amount provided to each State ;

(d) what action has been taken against them ; and

(e) whether Government are considering to have a direct investment for developing tourist spots in these States and UTs in future?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN) : (a) to (d) The Department of Tourism, Government of India extends Financial Assistance to the State Governments/UT Administrations every year for identified tourism projects as per the guidelines. Funds are sanctioned based on *inter se* priority of the proposal and availability of funds. Utilisation of funds for the projects is primarily the responsibility of the concerned State Governments/UT Administrations. However, delay in implementation, if any, regarding utilisation of funds is taken up with the State Governments/UT Administrations for remedial measures.

(e) In the Ninth Plan, schemes envisaged financial contribution from the State/UT Governments. In the Tenth Plan now it is proposed that in the scheme of Integrated Development of Tourist Circuits entire funding would be done by the Department of Tourism, Government of India. However, State support would be required for certain items of the project.

Professional Archaeologists in ASI

98. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had till nineties been headed by a professional archaeologist and with the change, its functioning has been adversely affected;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government now propose to revert the old practice of the ASI being headed by a well-known archaeologist ; and

(c) if so, by when it is likely to be reverted to the old system?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN) : (a) to (c) The post of Director General has been headed by IAS Officers since 10-9-1996 as the UPSC could not select a suitable candidate as per the extant Recruitment Rules. While this did not affect the functioning of ASI, the Recruitment Rules have since been amended and sent to the Press for Notification. The post will be filled up as soon as an eligible person is available as per the criteria prescribed.

Project for bank erosion of River Ganga

99. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an expert committee set up by the Planning Commission has recommended Rs. 927 crore project to take the serious bank erosion problem of the River Ganga ;

(b) if so, whether only Rs. 19.68 crore has been approved by the Ministry of Water Resources ;

(c) whether Government propose to undertake at least the short-term projects estimated at Rs. 315 crore ; and

(d) if so, the time-limit of the projects ?